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The message sent by Chairman of the State Administration Council of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Prime Minister of the State Senior General Min Aung Hlaing to the ceremony to mark the 75th Anniversary Shan State Day

7 February 2022

Auspiciousness to all esteemed ethnic national brethren,

I very much take pride in grasping the opportunity to send my message in honorary of the 75th Anniversary Shan State Day which falls on 7 February today.

The Shan State is located on some 60,000 square miles of area in the eastern hilly area of Myanmar. As the Shan State is sharing a border with neighbouring countries, it is an important state for the country. Many ethnic nationals such as Shan, Kachin, Kayah, Palaung, Pa-O, Wa, Danu and Kokang in unison are altogether residing in a state full of natural beauties. Moreover, the Shan State is endowed with underground and above ground natural resources such as ore, gems, teak and forestry products as sound foundations in addition to booming border trade.

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar has been standing tall for many years with firm evidence which showed flourishing own monarchical mechanism, own culture and literature. All ethnic nationals have been residing there in successive eras in the global community by sharing their future. However, the whole of Myanmar fell under servitude in 1885 as British colonialists occupied Myanmar after staging three aggressive wars.

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Five-Point Road Map of the State Administration Council

1. The Union Election Commission will be reconstituted and its mandated tasks, including the scrutiny of voter lists, shall be implemented in accordance with the law.
2. Effective measures will be taken with added momentum to prevent and manage the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Actions will be taken to ensure the speedy recovery of businesses from the impact of COVID-19.
4. Emphasis will be placed on achieving enduring peace for the entire nation in line with the agreements set out in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement.
5. Upon accomplishing the provisions of the state of emergency, free and fair multiparty democratic elections will be held in line with the 2008 Constitution, and further work will be undertaken to hand over State duties to the winning party in accordance with democratic standards.

SAC members pay homage to Lawkananda pagoda, inspect Sittway port



Members of SAC Admiral Tin Aung San, Mahn Nyein Maung, Daw Aye Nu Sein and U Moug Har view docking of vessels at Sittway Port on 6 February 2022.

MEMBERS of the State Administration Council Admiral Tin Aung San, Mahn Nyein Maung, Daw Aye Nu Sein and U Moug Har, together with Rakhine State Chief Minister Dr Aung Kyaw Min, Commander of the Western Command Maj-Gen Htin Latt Oo, and state cabinet ministers, paid homage

to the Lawkananda pagoda in Sittway yesterday and donated cash to the fund of the pagoda. The SAC members and party also watched the renovation of the cave of the pagoda, preparations to renovate the terrace and Aung Sakyar Muni Ordination Hall.

Afterwards, the SAC mem-

bers and party inspected the Sittway Port, the Kaladan River Multimodal Transit Transport Project, and officials from the Myanma Port Authority explained information about the project including the construction status of the port infrastructures and the development of a highway from

Paletwa to the Myanmar-India border.

They also viewed dredging of silt near the jetty of Sittway Port and docking of vessels there.

The Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project will increase trade opportunities between Myanmar and

India, with the emergence of international ports which will access to other countries as well. Improved transport in Rakhine State and Chin State will greatly contribute to the development of the region and locals will also benefit from access to cruise-based tourism opportunities.—MNA

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National Objectives of Diamond Jubilee Union Day 2022

- (1) All ethnic nationals to safeguard non-disintegration of the Union, national unity and sovereignty forever
- (2) To perpetually ensure strengthening dynamic Union Spirit which is a genuine patriotic spirit
- (3) To further strive for the perpetual existence of the country through strong and united strength of all ethnic national brethren
- (4) To build the Union based on democracy and federalism in the realization of genuine, disciplined multiparty democracy
- (5) To equalize development of all regions and states while making efforts for the enhancement of health, education and job opportunities of the ethnic nationals

Motto of 75th Anniversary Union Day 2022

*** United strength across Myanmar focuses on Union affairs forever**

State Administration Council Press Release

Re-invitation to Myanmar citizens who reside in various regions for many reasons

1. Some student youths, State service personnel and citizens, with worries, have evaded to areas of EAOs and foreign countries due to the incitements and intimidation of NLD members, extremist followers, unlawful associations and terrorist groups such as CRPH and NUG, stimulation of CDM, and persons and organizations at home and abroad not wishing to restore peace and stability of the State since Tatmadaw assumed the State responsibilities on 1 February 2021.
2. They are further worried about the dictatorship statement and speeches of unlawful association and terrorist group CRPH and NUG, and some relevant persons. As they face no security guarantee and difficulties in socio-economic life in those areas, they wish to return to their native lands.
3. **The State Administration Council will specifically ease restrictions for service personnel, intellectuals and intelligentsia, and persons from various arenas and citizens who, with worries, absconded from the country except for persons who committed murders, robberies, setting fires, mine explosions and intentional attacks on security troops, those who crowded to attack public service personnel and some people, those who destroyed government and private-owned buildings and those who are highly involved in the CDM activities by providing monetary assistance and other means.**
4. As those who evade their native areas are also citizens, the State Administration Council will arrange their returns from the evaded areas to various parts of Myanmar.
5. As such, the information was released that if those who evaded to various areas, except for persons who committed any kinds of crime, wish to return to their native lands in Myanmar of their own accord due to multiple worries, the citizens abroad can contact nearby ward, village, township and district administration bodies and relevant embassies, military attaché offices and consulates in accord with the easing restrictions under the law.

*Information Team
State Administration Council*

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Ethnic cultural groups visit prominent landmarks in Nay Pyi Taw



ETHNIC cultural troupes from regions and states who will present traditional performances at the Diamond Jubilee Union Day celebrations visited prominent landmarks in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

During their visit in Nay Pyi Taw, the cultural dance groups visited the National Landmarks Garden, Defence Services Museum, Zoological Garden, Planetarium, National Museum, and the preparation to build Maravijaya Buddha Image.

Naw Kyu Kyu Than, leader of the Kayin Cultural Troupe, said, "The troupe members are

happy to be on this study tour. By visiting the National Museum, we have the opportunity to learn more about the culture and heritage of our people."

It is leant that there are 33 delegate members from Kachin State, 28 from Kayah State, 40 from Kayin State, 37 from Chin State, 34 from Mon State and 35 from Rakhine State in the cultural troupes. As for the second-day of the study tour, they will visit Uppatasanti Pagoda, Nay Pyi Taw Budh Gaya, Water Fountain Park, Gems Museum, Hluttaw Building and Junction Centre.—MNA

Members of ethnic cultural troupes from regions and states are viewing round at booths of National Museum in Nay Pyi Taw on 6 February.

Further State responsibilities to be discharged

- There are many examples of the consequences of the instability of the state in the world.
- Tatmadaw is not an institution for seeking its own sakes or for only one organization. It is an institution to protect all national people. It conducted defence services by cooperating with the people in successive eras and it faithfully served to be a firm multiparty democracy pathway for 10 years. I pledge that we will carry out it in line with such a process.
- If we review the situations, the desires of the local/foreign terrorists and their supporters lead to the absolute destruction of the country rather than democracy. The state defence is to protect the people and we cannot let the anarchy and we cannot neglect it. Therefore, we have to sacrifice in some places.

(Excerpt from the speech made by State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on one-year State responsibilities discharged by the State Administration Council on 1-2-2022)

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council

Announcement 1/2022

6th Waxing of Tabodwe 1383 ME

6 February 2022

Invitation to Perpetual Peace and Diamond Jubilee Union Day Ceremony

1. The State Administration Council is implementing the five-point Road Map for ensuring stability and development and flourishing the genuine, disciplined multiparty democracy. The government adopted the policy that “emphasis will be placed on achieving enduring peace for the entire nation in line with the agreements set out in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA)” as the fourth point of the Road Map. To do so, the State Administration Council is continuously implementing the peace process as part of emphasizing the peace in line with the NCA.
2. The Tatmadaw issued 20 statements related to ceasefire from 21 December 2018 to 28 February 2022 to conduct ceasefire. After meeting with the Cambodian Prime Minister taking ASEAN alternate chair on his working visit to Myanmar on 7 and 8 January 2022, a joint declaration was issued to continue the ceasefire till the end of this year.
3. The message of greetings 2022 made by the Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister stated, “The year 2022 is of importance. Coming 12 February is the Diamond Jubilee Union Day and the 4 January 2023 will be the Diamond Jubilee Independence Day. Hence, it is important to further strengthen the sovereignty of the State and progress of the nation with development fruits. So, we have to start the new paces for restoration of the peace this year. As it is mentioned in the fourth point of the five-point road map, all stakeholders and organizations are invited to join the peace talks.” Although Myanmar has regained 75 years, the strengthening of sovereignty and development of the nation do not have improvement as expected due to occurrences of internal armed conflicts and the country loses the strength and capabilities. It is necessary to restore the perpetual peace to apply these strength and capabilities for the State development at full capacity.
4. Restoration of the perpetual peace is very important for building the Union based on democracy and federalism. In this regard, the majority of political parties focused their discussions on construction of the Union based on democracy and federalism within five years. The National Unity and Peace Restoration Central Committee, the work committee and the coordination committee were formed for working the national unity and perpetual peace. The peace committee has so far held meetings with NCA signatories 16 times, non-NCA signatories nine times, political parties seven times and religious leaders and peace negotiators two times, totalling 34.
5. The State Administration Council is arranging the management for holding meetings with ethnic armed organizations for restoring the perpetual peace. Except the groups declared as terrorist groups, the government invited not only NCA signatory ethnic armed organizations but also non-NCA signatory ethnic armed organizations to talks the perpetual peace. The schedule was especially expressed that the meetings would not be pre-restricted for topics of the talks with the aim of freely exchanging views among them.
6. Among three future tasks of the State, **two national tasks** are “to ensure prosperity of the State and the food sufficiency” and **the two political tasks** are “to strengthen the genuine, disciplined multiparty democracy and build the Union based on democracy and federalism.” As such, the new steps will be made for the peace as of this year as part of implementing the process for ensuring **the integration of peace and sovereignty**.
7. It is necessary to focus on talking the perpetual peace through seeking the way to solve answer in negotiation in accord with the democratic practices in order to politically solve the political problems in successive eras as internal affairs of our country. On the occasion coincided with the Diamond Jubilee Union Day, all ethnic armed organizations are especially invited to the Diamond Jubilee Union Day grand ceremony as well as the pre-coordination meeting on perpetual peace talks to build the Union based on democracy and federalism during the ceremony of the Diamond Jubilee Union Day. The entire ethnic national people are requested to negotiate all stakeholders to attend the free and unrestricted peace talks and the Diamond Jubilee Union Day for restoration of the perpetual peace of the government.

State Administration Council

332 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 6 February, total figure rises to 537,901

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **537,901** after **332** new cases were reported on 6 February 2022 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, **514,076** have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll still stands at **19,310** without casualties for fourteenth consecutive days.

COVID-19 vaccine is being injected to those of priority groups in regions and states for prevention and control of the disease. Up to 5-2-2022, a total of **22,389,299** people have been vaccinated. Of them, **19,213,678** people have been fully vaccinated and **3,175,621** people yet to get the second shots.—MNA

The message sent by Chairman of the State Administration Council of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Prime Minister of the State Senior General Min Aung Hlaing to the ceremony to mark the 75th Anniversary Shan State Day 7 February 2022

FROM PAGE-1

The Burma Independence Army led by General Aung San joining hands with Japan totally drove out British colonialists during the Second World War and completely wipe off enemies from the Myanmar land on 27 March 1945.

After finishing the Second World War, British troops reoccupied Myanmar. Meanwhile, the terribly suffering impacts of war motivated political thought and activities of Saophas of the Shan State, public leaders and the people.

As part of implementing the firm vows of all ethnic nationals that they all would continue various kinds of fighting during the period when they had not secured genuine independence yet, leaders of all ethnic national people strived for independence struggles in unison with might and main. In the independence struggles, Wuntho Saopha U Aung Myat from the Shan State, Shan Saophas and Shan nationals bravely showed off their patriotic spirit in fighting.

In the history of Myanmar's independence struggle, national leader General Aung San held talks with Saophas from the Shan State and representatives in Taunggyi while making on a tour of meeting with leaders of ethnic nationals to regain the independence of Myanmar. General Aung San went to London in January 1947 when he held discussions with the British government to seek guarantee of the independence for the whole of Myanmar including hilly regions.

On 7 February 1947, Shan, Kachin and Chin ethnic national leaders made a decision to cooperate with the mainland for regaining the independence in Panglong City of the Shan State. As a gesture of honouring the 7th February when the decision was made to regain the independence of the whole Myanmar without separation of hilly regions and mainland area, the day has been marked as the Shan State Day for 75 years ago. Moreover, being a period in advance to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee Union Day, it brings the significant and deep essence. Hence, Shan State Day is a significant occasion concerning all ethnic nationals as well as the entire Myanmar nationals.

National unity is the lifeblood for peace and stability, and sustainability of sovereignty of a country as well as a great drive for development of a country. That is why it is necessary to remove suspicions among ethnic national brethren so as to restore perpetual peace. Currently, the local people residing in the regions where the peace has not been restored yet are running out of patience to the aimless fighting. The improvement of socioeconomic status and safe and sound living is the keen and same wishes of the entire ethnic people.

Hence, the unity among national brethren must be built on mutual understanding and forgiveness and trust. If peace can be restored in the country one day ahead of the schedule, it will benefit the people one day earlier.

Nowadays, the dialogues can be convened thanks to strenuous efforts for the restoration of the peace for the Union. Hence, more benefit related to peace is going to come out. The government has adopted and is implementing the five-point road map and nine political, economic and social objectives as part of efforts to make preparations to hold a free and fair multiparty democracy general election for ensuring peace and stability and democratization process. Hence, I'd like to urge the entire ethnic national people to participate in the process of emerging freedom, safety, peace and stability, and development of Myanmar.

It is necessary to restore the unity and understanding among ethnic national brethren built at Panglong in 1947.

At present, all need to strive for showing off national unity as soon as possible similar to a similar event in Panglong city 75 years ago.

Ethnic national people are facing suffering without peace and stability triggered by riots and insurrections in the country, harming the development of the State. All ethnic national people need to review the acts wrongly committed through personal cult and partisan without considering the interests of the State and the people for leading it on the right track. Otherwise, such acts may harm the non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and perpetuation of sovereignty, and the future of the nation would be reluctant. As such, the entire ethnic national people are urged to participate in measures of peace and stability of the State and the rule of law through the nationalistic spirit and the Union spirit.

I hereby send this message and urge the entire ethnic national people to amicably join hands with the government with the Panglong Spirit in order to successfully accomplish the mission for building the democratic federal Union based on federalism with the essence of justice, liberty and equal rights.

*Sd/ Min Aung Hlaing
Senior General
Prime Minister of the State
Chairman
State Administration Council*

Preparations to hold Diamond Jubilee Union Day events underway across Myanmar

THE Diamond Jubilee Union Day, which will fall on 12 February, will be grandly marked with the events in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area and across Myanmar.

Event planning includes erecting Union Day promot-

ing billboards in Nay Pyi Taw, erecting the flags of the regions and states across Yazathingaha Road which is a flag-relay route, installing colour lights at the roundabouts on that route and decorating with ethnic people pictures. Preparations are

being undertaken to mark the Diamond Anniversary Union Day in the regions and states as well.

Similar preparations are being made in Yangon City as well as across the nation with installation of the multicoloured

lightings at the Yangon City Hall and the Maha Bandoola Park and erection of the billboard bearing "the national objectives of the Diamond Jubilee Union Day", and the People's Park in Dagon Township as well.

Multicoloured lightings are

decorated at U Wisara Roundabout in Dagon Township, U Htaung Bo Roundabout in Bahan Township and Hanthawady Roundabout in Sangyoung Township with hoisting flags.—
MNA

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CIRCULATION & DISTRIBUTION

(+95) (01) 8604532,
Hotline - 09 454237515

ADVERTISING & MARKETING

(+95) (01) 8604530,
Hotline - 09 251022355

marketing@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
subscription@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

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gnlmnews@gmail.com
www.gnlm.com.mm

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Myanmar Handicraft Centre, small-scale industrial products and handicraft expo inaugurated in Yangon

AS a gesture of hailing the Diamond Jubilee Union Day, the opening ceremony of Myanmar Handicraft Centre and small-scale industrial products and handicraft Fair and Expo was formally held on 5 February in North Okkalapa Township, Yangon Region.

At the event, Union Minister U Hla Moe for Cooperatives and Rural Development addressed the themes of the centre to preserve and Myanmar canon of traditional arts and crafts (locally called Pansemyo), keep Myanmar cultural traditions alive, support traditional handicrafts businesses, provide one-stop service for the traditional arts and crafts across the country, explore new markets for export growth and promote small-scale industries. A wide range of handicrafts



Opening ceremony of Myanmar Handicraft Centre and small-scale industrial products and handicraft Fair and Expo is in progress in North Okkalapa Township on 5 February.

including lacquerware, traditional textile and weaving products, wood carving, silver and bronze products, arts, carving made of timber, bamboo and gems, bam-

boo and rattan products, sea shell and oyster shell crafts, and other local crafts from each region and state are available at the centre.

Furthermore, it will help

enhance the livelihoods of those engaged in traditional arts and crafts making businesses, he added.

Later, Yangon Region Chief

Minister U Soe Thein highlighted that the fair and the expo contributing to the economic benefit and well-beings. This being so, all the stakeholders must exert concerted efforts to have sustainable development for traditional handicraft industry.

The Union Minister, the Yangon Region Chief Minister and the director-general formally opened the centre.

Subsequently, the Union Minister and party also cut the ribbon of the small-scale industrial products and handicrafts fair and expo (Yangon) and inspected the exhibit booths.

The Union Minister also opened new office of Yangon Region Cooperative Department and visited a shop of Moe Oo Pan General Trading Cooperative Limited.—MNA

Construction Ministry states no financial worry for construction of Dala Bridge



File photo shows Myanmar-Korea Friendship Bridge (Dala) seen under construction. **PHOTO: MYINT MAUNG KYAW**

THE loans from the Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF) helps cope with financial stress in the construction of Myanmar-Korea Friendship Bridge (Dala) project in Yangon, according to the Ministry of Construction.

"We have no financial worries for that project. EDCF keeps providing loans," said U Kyaw Kaung Cho, deputy director-general of the Department of Bridge under the Ministry of Construction.

Nevertheless, the official did not address detail of the current loan availability. The project linking Phonegyi Street, Lanmadaw Township to Bo Min Young Road,

Dala Township commenced in May 2019 and it is slated to end in November 2022.

The difficulties in money withdrawal and security concerns hinder the project. The COVID-19 restrictions delayed the construction project. It was earlier expected to complete in October 2022, said U Kyaw Kaung Cho.

The project keeps running in the present, including installing tiles, bored piles and construction of approaching bridge in Dala side and ramp bridge in Yangon side. The construction has been completed 30 per cent so far, he added.

Dala residents are expecting the completion of the bridge

as it can enhance the socio-economic development and facilitate the transportation amidst the COVID-19 impacts and political changes. "I would like the Dala Bridge project to finish as soon as possible. It can cause delay to health, economy and social activity," said U Aung Kyaw Myint, a resident in Dala Township.

The four-lane, cable-stayed bridge is 6,000 feet long, 151-meter wide and 49 meter high. Dala bridge project will spend US\$168.174 million including \$130 million loan from the Republic of Korea, according to an official statement in the beginning of the project.—Ko Naing (Bago)/GNLM

Organic fertilizer practices to be fostered in 2020 monsoon rice cultivation season

IN a bid to minimize the use of chemical fertilizer owing to high prices in the international market, organic fertilizer including compost of green manure, farmyard manure and crop residues will be utilized in the coming 2020 monsoon rice cultivation season, said Chairman U Aung Myo Oo of pilot-project for agricultural research station.

That project will be implemented at Yunshan agricultural research station in Yedashe, Bago Region. It will commence in March 2022.

Organic fertilizer practice is essential when the prices of fertilizer soared to multiple-year

highs in international market. The agricultural sector could face input burden from exorbitant prices of imported fertilizer. The compost of green manure is the simplest, eco-friendly and least costly way for agricultural nutrients and it helps reduce the use of chemical fertilizer about 50 per cent, he elaborated.

"The land deterioration is attributed to the agricultural pollution. Sustainable soil management is crucial in agriculture. This way, high yield and quality crops can be expected. The stakeholders in the supply chains have to exert efforts to boost the production," U Ye Min

Aung, president of Myanmar Rice Federation. The pilot project for Agricultural Research Station began in 2020, covering Thabyaytan village in Yedashe Township as Area 1, DaikU Township as Area 2 and Shansu village, Thayawady Township, Bago Region as Area 3.—Ko Naing (Bago)/GNLM

The photo shows already-transplanted paddy farm used with organic fertilizer at Yunshan agricultural research station in Yedashe, Bago Region.



MoH discusses measures to effectively prevent, control and treat for COVID-19 in Yangon Region

THE Ministry of Health held a coordination meeting on the effective prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19 in a timely manner in Yangon Region yesterday.

At the meeting, Union Minister for Health Dr Thet Khaing Win said that it has been found that the incidence of COVID-19 disease has increased again in Yangon Region, adding that preparations must be made for all sides to prevent and controlling the rise of the outbreaks in a timely manner.

Arrangements must be

made to check for the presence of the virus to suspected patients and those who have been in close contact with confirm patients in order to provide immediate treatment if the disease is found, he said. He also said to form emergency response teams and patient bed management committees based on districts for immediate treatment.

Director-General for Public Health Department Dr Myint Myint Than discussed a team consisting of the Deputy Director-General and the Director

from the Central Infectious Disease Control Branch are working to reinforcing the Department of Public Health in Yangon Region. She said emergency response teams will be formed based in four districts of Yangon Region and they will work together with relevant departments and organizations to transport patients to the relevant treatment centres or quarantine centres in a timely manner.

The Director-General from the Medical Services Department explained the condition of

referral of infected patients to the relevant district-level hospitals, clinics and treatment centres through district-based bed management committees, conditions to collaborate with affiliated departments, to reduce hospital stays, the reopening of treatment centres due to a shortage of patients in the third wave, to provide health human resources, conditions to prepare for oxygen and necessary medicines and medical supplies, and the availability of ambulances.

Afterwards, the Union

Minister called on the public to prepare for the prevention and control of the disease by considering what to do if one is a self-suspected patient or a laboratory-confirmed patient to make everything go smoothly in the hospitalization of COVID-19 disease. He also said health awareness campaigns should be increased to encourage the public to actively participate in immunization activities, to strictly follow the prevention rules, and that the Ministry will provide necessary assistance in time.—MNA

Myanmar attracts \$109.6 mln of FDI from China in past four months

SIXTEEN China-listed enterprises brought in US\$109.6 million into Myanmar in the past four months (Oct-Jan) of the six-month mini-budget period, according to data released by the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA).

Singapore has been the top source of FDI so far, investing \$275.7 million. China is placed as the second largest investor of Myanmar.

Those enterprises listed from China, Singapore, India, Republic of Korea, France, Hong Kong (SAR), Nepal, China (Taipei) and Seychelles also made investments this year.

Chinese companies primarily made investment in manufacturing sector.

Myanmar has drawn foreign direct investment of more than US\$506.82 million during Oct-Dec period, including expansion of capital by existing enterprises and investments in the Thilawa Special Economic Zone, DICA's statistics indicated.

Of 32 foreign enterprises permitted and endorsed by MIC and the respective investment committees during Oct-Jan period, 23 enterprises pumped FDI into the manufacturing sector. Agriculture, electricity, construction, and hotels and tourism sectors received one each project, livestock and fisheries sector attracted two projects, and three enterprises made investment in other service sectors.—KK/GNLM

Myanmar's wooden handicrafts marketable at domestic market

THE sale of Myanmar's handicrafts made of wood in the local market was booming, said Daw Pyae Pyae, a manufacturer and seller of the handicrafts in Thabeikkyin Township.

"These wooden handicrafts are being produced and sold at low prices at the local market. In the production, various products are made and sold according to the categories. The price of each

type of products sold in the market ranges from over K1,000 to K1 million. Currently, there are online customers in the country and sales are booming," Daw Pyae Pyae said.

"We sell Myanmar's wooden handicrafts in the market. We make and sell all kinds of products. We do everything according to the requirements. We primarily produce and sell them

in the domestic market and export them to China and Thailand as well.

"At the moment, the online sales of alms tray are strong locally and abroad. Most of the local orders are for traditional Myanmar alms bowl (Bagan Era Style) to be kept in the living room. More and more Myanmar products are being used recently.

"Many home appliances are made of plastic. Compare it to materials made of porcelain. The price is lower and the quality of the product is different. As a result, domestic sales of wooden crafts have improved," Daw Pyae Pyae added.

Myanmar handicrafts made of wood and consumer goods are popular now. In addition, there is a plan to hold a fair to display and sell Myanmar's handicrafts made of wood according to the local sellers.—Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-printing House)/GNLM



Myanmar's handicrafts made of wood are displayed at the showroom.

COVID-19 vaccine drive continues in various regions, states



A health staff injects COVID-19 vaccine into a local in Patheingyi of Ayeyawady Region on 6 February.

DOCTORS and nurses from public hospitals, Tatmadaw medical teams, healthcare workers and volunteers are working hard to administer COVID-19 vaccines in different states and regions as the vaccination programme is one of the most important activities in the prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19 disease.

The COVID-19 vaccine is inoculated daily to target groups regardless of race or religion, including Buddhist monks and nuns, local people over the age of 40, students, religious leaders, prisoners, people with disabilities, ethnic armed organizations, people with chronic diseases, people in IDP camps and over 12-year-old students, respectively.

Doctors and nurses from public hospitals, medical teams from the Tatmadaw, relevant healthcare workers in collaboration with volunteers injected COVID-19 vaccines to 281 people from Kengtung and Mongpyin townships in eastern Shan State, 1,201 people from Myeik Township in Taninthayi Region, 21,455 people from 26 townships in Ayeyawady Region, 6,520 people from four townships in Rakhine State and 758 people from Ottwin and Htantabin townships in Bago Region, respectively yesterday.

It is reported that officials from the respective Military Commands visited the sites and coordinated the necessary work.—MNA

Security forces raid PDF terrorists in YeU, Sagaing Region, confiscates arms, ammunition

SECURITY forces yesterday raided so-called PDF terrorists who were camping in a school in Taungpyinngge village to commit acts of destruction in YeU Township in Sagaing Region.

A group of around 150 PDF terrorists and NLD extremists attacked the local police station

inngge village with heavy injuries. As they were camping in a school in the village, committing extortion from local people and preparing terrorist acts, security forces raided the school.

It was reported that the terrorists fled to the western part of the village and the security



Arms and ammunition were seized from PDF terrorists at the school in Taungpyinngge village of YeU Township in Sagaing Region on 6 February.



A map shows clash between security forces and PDF group in Taungpyinngge village in YeU Township on 6 February.

and security forces in Winmar village in Kani Township, Sagaing Region on the morning of 5 February. When security forces returned fire, the terrorists fled in disarray to Taungpy-

forces did not have casualty. However, one Skat motorcar, five homemade pistols, 7,000 rounds of AK ammunition, 50 rounds of 9mm ammunition, 3 magazines of AK, 13 hand grenades,

120 detonators, five Pyi of gunpowder, two suits of camouflage uniforms with TNLA badge and 10 camouflage uniforms without badge and other accessories.

As an intentional camping

at the school that is not used for military purposes is a war crime under the Geneva Conventions and international law, effective action will be taken against those crime breakers

under the Counter-Terrorism Law, the Penal Code and the relevant existing laws, and the security forces are continuing to take security measures in the area.—MNA

CRIME NEWS

Illegal timber, vehicles, personal goods, foodstuffs seized



Illegal foodstuffs in vehicle are seized at Chinshwehaw Trade Camp in Shan State.

UNDER the supervision of the Anti-Illegal Trade Steering Committee, effective action is being taken to prevent illegal trade in accordance with the law.

On 5 February, the Customs Department officials inspected two containers of goods imported from China and seized various types of consumer goods that were not listed in the import declaration ID (estimated value

K91.4 million) at Myanmar Industrial Port Container Inspection Station and action is being taken in accordance with the customs law.

Similarly, a customs team on duty at the Mayangchaung Permanent Checkpoint, Mon State inspected a vehicle and seized various undocumented consumer goods (estimated at K5.63 million) in one vehicle, and took action in

accordance with customs law.

A patrol team led by the Customs Department at the Yepu Permanent Checkpoint, Shan State seized one unlicensed vehicle (valued at approximately K5 million) near Yepu village and action is being taken in accordance with the customs law.

In addition, under the management of the Anti-Illegal Trade Task Force, officials seized illegal Chinese-made food items (estimated value K552,000) from one vehicle at Chinshwehaw Trade Camp, Shan State, and action is being taken in accordance with

the customs law.

Moreover, inspections were carried out by combined inspection teams led by the Forest Department of Bago Region and a total of 43,2024 tonnes of illegal timber (estimated value K8,579,860) in Bago, Toungoo and Thayawady districts was seized and action is being taken in accordance with the forest law.

Therefore, a total of six arrests were made on 5 and 6 February. The estimated value of the seized items is K111,161,860, according to the Anti-Illegal Trade Steering Committee.—MNA



Consumer goods are seized at Myanmar Industrial Port Container Inspection Station.

K15.35 billion worth of stimulant tablets seized in Thazi

POLICE in Thazi Township have seized over K15.35 billion worth of stimulant tablets, according to the Myanmar Police Force.

A combined team consisting of members of the Anti-Drug Police Force made an inspection on Taunggyi-Thazi Road, Thazi Township in Mandalay Region at 4 pm on 31 January. A 12-wheeler MITSUBISHI FUSO driven by Thiha Aung and accompanied by Khun Ta Bauk from Taunggyi to Thazi was reportedly searched at the Kywetatson Combined Checkpoint.

A total of 10.2375 million stimulant tablets worth over K15.35 billion were also confiscated at 4:30 pm on 1 February as Ma Nilar Oo who participated in the drug trafficking was arrested along with an IPSUM vehicle near mile post 115/6 on the Yangon-Mandalay Expressway.

According to the investigation, the seized psychotropic drugs were trafficked from Shan State (South) to Yangon Region, and the three are being charged under the law, according to the MPF.—MNA

Hail 75th Anniversary Shan State Day with prosperity

SHAN, Kachin, Kayah, Palaung, Pa-O, Wa, Danu and Kokang ethnic nationals have been residing in the Shan State altogether by sharing the future since yore.

The Shan State is located on some 60,000 square miles of area in the eastern hilly area of Myanmar. The Shan State is sharing a border with neighbouring countries. The Shan State is endowed with underground and above ground natural resources as sound foundations in addition to booming border trade.

Hence, the unity among national brethren must be built on mutual understanding and forgiveness and trust. If peace can be restored in the country one day ahead of the schedule, it will benefit the people one day earlier. That is why all the national people residing in the Shan State, as well as the whole nation, are to share their future together for the society.

the independence in Panglong City of the Shan State. As a gesture of honouring the 7th February when the decision was made to regain the independence of the whole Myanmar without separation of hilly regions and mainland area, the day has been marked as the Shan State Day for 75 years ago.

National unity is the lifeblood for peace and stability, and sustainability of sovereignty of a country as well as a great drive for development of a country. It is necessary to remove suspicions among ethnic national brethren so as to restore perpetual peace. The improvement of socioeconomic status and safe and sound living is the keen and same wishes of the entire ethnic people.

Hence, the unity among national brethren must be built on mutual understanding and forgiveness and trust. If peace can be restored in the country one day ahead of the schedule, it will benefit the people one day earlier. That is why all the national people residing in the Shan State, as well as the whole nation, are to share their future together for the society.



Pandemic Begins To Ease Around The World

The average number of global daily cases dropped by a tenth this week to 3.03 million, after increasing for 15 weeks in a row ...



People visit one of Stockholm's busiest shopping streets on 4 February, 2022, during the ongoing coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic. PHOTO: AFP

THE COVID-19 pandemic started to ease around the world this week after a three-and-a-half-month rampage of ever-increasing infections.

Here is a state of play based

on AFP's database.

10 Percent Drop

The average number of global daily cases dropped by a tenth this week to 3.03 million, after increasing for 15 weeks in

a row, according to an AFP tally to Thursday.

The confirmed cases only reflect a fraction of the actual number of infections, with varying counting practices and levels of testing in different

countries.

Global Sigh Of Relief

Almost every region of the world saw an improvement over the past seven days.

In the United States/Canada zone the number of new daily cases dropped by 38 percent, while Africa saw a 21 percent fall and Asia a 16 percent drop. Cases in the Latin America/Caribbean zone decreased by 13 percent and in the Middle East by four percent.

The situation was almost stable in Europe, with a one percent rise.

Once a catch-up in Australian figures is factored out, the number of infections in Oceania decreased by around a tenth.

Main Spikes

Iran saw the biggest spike in the number of new cases this week with a 233 percent rise.

The Solomon Islands in the Pacific followed with 138 percent more cases, Armenia

with 137 percent, neighbouring Azerbaijan was 133 percent up, while cases doubled in South Korea.

Main Drops

The Dominican Republic saw the biggest drop of the week with 65 percent fewer cases, followed by Nepal with 55 percent less, Argentina (down 51 percent), Jamaica (minus 50 percent) and Morocco (minus 49 percent).

US Still Has Most Cases

The US remained by far the country with the highest number of new cases with 362,800 per day on average, which nevertheless was a drop of 39 percent on the previous week. Next in line came France with 289,200 cases, down a fifth, and India where they fell by a third to 204,500.

On a per capita basis, the country with the most new cases over the week was Denmark with 5,337 per 100,000 inhabit-

ants, followed by Slovenia with 5,112, Israel (4,497), Georgia (3,508) and Portugal (3,455).

Deaths

The number of COVID-linked deaths increased globally for the fourth week in a row to 10,507 per day, a rise of 16 percent.

Even though the highly contagious Omicron variant led to four times more daily infections than previous waves, daily deaths remain far lower than their record high in January 2021 when they skirted 15,000.

The US recorded the most deaths this week with 2,576 per day, ahead of India (1,040) and Brazil (702).

The countries reporting the highest death rates in proportion to their population were all in the Balkans - Bosnia (11 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants), Croatia (8.9), Northern Macedonia (8.7), and Montenegro and Bulgaria (8.0 each).

SOURCE: AFP

Study finds increased levels of depression, anxiety in disabled people during pandemic

A new study has found that disabled people have been experiencing high levels of depression and anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study has been published in the 'Rehabilitation Psychology Journal'. Social isolation was the main predictor for both depression and anxiety, said Kathleen Bogart, co-author on the study and an associate professor of psychology at OSU. "We know that people with disabilities were more socially isolated before the pandemic, so for a variety of reasons, the pandemic has amplified that disparity," she said.

More severe infection

People with disabilities are often immunocompromised or have comorbidities that would cause more severe infection from COVID-19, requiring more strict isolation at home to avoid exposure to the virus. The study examined survey responses from 441 adults between October and December 2020 who self-identified as having a disability. In total, 61 per cent of participants met the criteria for probable major depressive disorder and 50 per cent for probable generalized anxiety disorder. That's much higher than the pre-pandemic baseline among people with and without disabilities, Bogart said. Previous research in the field has found that about 22 per cent of people with disabilities are diagnosed with depression during their lifetime. According to the Anxiety & Depression Association of America, in an average year, roughly 7 per cent of all US adults have major depressive disorder and three per cent have generalized anxiety disorder. Stigma was also a major predictor for depression and anxiety, particularly from conversations and policies around medical rationing where disabled people were essentially deemed a low priority for life-saving COVID resources. This translated into greater fear of catching the virus and needing medical care that might not be avail-

able, and therefore more social isolation, Bogart said.

"Especially early on in the beginning of the pandemic, there were explicit policies in place that disabled people would not be given priority to receive a ventilator or to receive even COVID tests when those were scarce," she said.

Resources on patients

Medical practitioners were directed to focus resources on patients who were likely to have a "good quality of life" after COVID, but the health care system frequently underestimates the quality of life among disabled people, whether it be someone who uses a wheelchair or someone who has an intellectual disability, she said. "Some of those policies thankfully got removed, though I think some are still in place," Bogart said.

"But even when those policies don't exist, there are a lot of other more implicit ways that health care was difficult to access," she added. For example, at different points during the pandemic, hospitals and health care centers have delayed or cancelled all "non-essential" health care to limit transmission of COVID within their facilities. This means that disabled people cannot access their regularly scheduled health care, including physical therapy or surgery, which can exacerbate their conditions. Despite the surge in mental health issues, Bogart sees some hope in the study's findings: Social isolation and access to health care are points that can be addressed fairly easily, such as by connecting via Zoom and capitalizing on telehealth visits when possible. Several large disability organizations have been organizing virtual community events as well, which may be more accessible to some people than in-person events, depending on their disability. "We know that social support is really beneficial; what's interesting is perceived isolation or perceived social support is much more

important than the actual concrete number of friends in your social network," she said.

Home visits and in-home assistance

"It's all about whether someone perceives their support to be adequate," she added. Home visits and in-home assistance are also crucial for making health care accessible and safe for people with disabilities when the practitioner needs to physically treat or examine them, Bogart said. And within telehealth, Bogart said that health care systems can improve accessibility by providing automatic captioning for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, providing sign language interpreters and making platforms that blind patients can navigate, as well.

SOURCE: ANI



People with disabilities are vulnerable to complications from vaccine-preventable diseases, and every effort should be made to ensure equitable access to immunization for this population. PHOTO: FREDERIC J. BROWN/AFP

Myanmar Gazette

Appointment of Head of Service Organization

THE State Administration Council has appointed U Min Thu, Mill Manager of No 2 Steel Mill (Pangpet) of No 1 Heavy Industrial Enterprise under the Ministry of Industry, as Managing Director of the No 1 Heavy Industrial Enterprise of the same ministry on probation from the date, he assumes charge of his duties.



Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued at 7:00 pm Sunday 6 February 2022)

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is partly cloudy over the South Andaman Sea and South Bay and a few cloud over the North Andaman Sea and elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 7 February 2022: Rain or thundershowers will be widespread in Eastern Shan State, fairly widespread in Kachin, and (Northern and Southern) Shan states, scattered in Kayah, Kayin and Mon states and isolated in the remaining regions and states. Degree of certainty is (80%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Sea will be moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (6-8) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of slight decrease of night temperatures in Upper Sagaing Region and Kachin, Shan, Chin and Kayah states.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 7 February 2022: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 7 February 2022: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 7 February 2022: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

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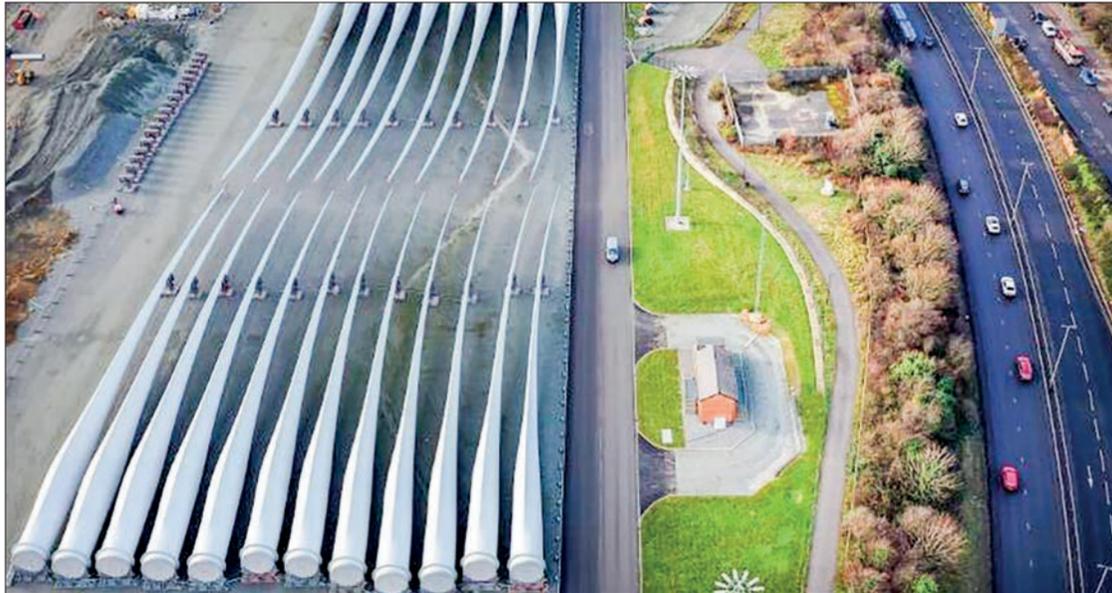
Wind powers change in England's industrial heartland

ON the banks of the River Humber in northern England, the winds of change are blowing through Hull, where factory workers busily craft turbine blades in a green revolution.

Hull, known for a once-thriving fishing industry, the poet Philip Larkin, rugby league, and the city's eponymous football club recently bought by Turkish TV personality Acun Ilıcalı, is home to Britain's biggest wind turbine blade plant.

That has placed Hull at the centre of the UK government's long-term plan to slash carbon emissions, tackle climate change and cut rocketing household energy bills.

German-Spanish giant Siemens Gamesa is rapidly expanding its facility to meet booming



Britain's biggest wind turbine blade factory is abuzz with activity, under the nation's long-term plan to slash carbon emissions, tackle climate change and cut rocketing household energy bills. **PHOTO: PAUL ELLIS/AFP**

demand and keep the country's much-trumpeted 2050 net-zero

target on track.

The need for cheaper source-

es of energy became increasingly urgent this week, as the

government scrambled to head off a cost of living crisis, faced with runaway electricity and gas costs that are fuelling decades-high inflation.

Britain unveiled financial support for households after the UK energy regulator lifted prices to reflect the spiking natural gas market.

Cheaper and cleaner

"We are doing our bit to tidy the world up and get cheaper and cleaner energy for everybody," blade painter Carl Jackson, 56, told AFP from the factory floor.

"I think wind power is a big part of the future. It's been a massive boost to jobs and the economy in Hull," added Jackson, who joined when Siemens Gamesa opened six years ago. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Record heat, forest fires in Colombia's Amazon in January

JANUARY of this year was the hottest month in the Colombian Amazon in a decade, leading to an increase in forest fires in the southeastern region and very likely impacting air quality in the capital Bogota, according to an Environment Ministry report seen by AFP Friday.

It said the month of January recorded the "highest hot spot values in the last 10 years" in the Colombian Amazon.

The phenomenon occurs, the ministry said, when the country goes through a season of low rainfall, and is due to human activity, of which "the most important is associated with deforestation fronts."

At least 80 percent of the "hot spots" were forest fires, a ministry spokesman told AFP. At the end of January, the ministry identified more than 3,300 "hot spots" in the six departments that make up the Colombian Amazon, including 1,300 in the Guaviare region alone.

According to testimony collected by AFP in October in the region, peasants and landowners take advantage of the dry season, from January to April, to burn or cut down trees and plant coca plants in their place, or to let cattle graze there. The Serrania del Chiribiquete National Park, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is particularly threatened, as is the Nukak National Nature Reserve, a vast territory of jungle inhabited by the last nomadic indigenous people of Colombia. — AFP ■

Toxic ash from DR Congo volcano falling on Goma

MORE than eight months after the Nyiragongo volcano erupted in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, toxic ash has started falling on nearby Goma, the city's Volcano Observatory said on Friday.

Thirty-two people died from burns or asphyxiation when Nyiragongo roared back into life on 22-23 May 2021, sending torrents of lava into the outskirts of Goma, capital of North Kivu province. Two more people died in accidents as residents fled en masse and hundreds of homes were destroyed.

The OVG observatory said the volcano was spewing out ash and dust because what was left of its central crater after the eruption was now collapsing. There had been a magnitude two earthquake in the crater just beforehand, it added.

Given how toxic the ash was, the OVG urged locals to observe strict hygiene precautions — to wear masks, avoid drinking rainwater, wash vegetables in tap water, eat in covered areas and keep food plates indoors. — AFP ■

UK's Kew tribute to Costa Rica at annual orchid fest

BRITAIN'S Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew unveiled its annual orchid festival Thursday, turning a sliver of southwest London into a riot of tropical colour and flora celebrating biodiversity hotspot Costa Rica.

Kew's 26th orchid showcase, opening Saturday, has this year been themed around the central American country hailed for conservation and features more than 5,000 orchids, some native to the nation on the Panama isthmus.

They include the national flower, a critically endangered orchid — named Guarianthe skinneri — bearing pink-purple



The Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew's annual orchid festival is this year celebrating biodiversity hotspot Costa Rica. **PHOTO: AFP**

petals and found in humid forests on granite cliff banks at some altitudes. — AFP ■

Hippos and humans learning to live in peace in DR Congo



In DR Congo, villagers are encroaching on the traditional habitat of giant African hippos. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

JUST how do you calm down a rampaging hippopotamus? Or even a herd of angry hippos.

On the banks of the Ruzizi river that divides the Democratic Republic of Congo from

Burundi, the villagers badly need to work it out after a spate of deaths — human and hippo.

Despairing environmental activists arrived this week to try to help both sides to learn to live together in peace.

"In December, the hippos laid waste three hectares of fields that my neighbour had planted," said Jeannette Chandazi, at Kamanyola, in DR Congo's South-Kivu province.

Kamanyola and the neighbouring village of Katogota have seen seven people killed and six more injured by hippos since 2019, said David Wiragi, of a local civil society environmental group. — AFP ■

WHO chief and Chinese premier hold Covid talks

THE head of the World Health Organization said Saturday he met Chinese Premier Li Keqiang for talks on Covid-19, including on the stalled investigation into the pandemic's origins.

WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, visiting Beijing for the 2022 Winter Olympics, posted a picture on Twitter of the pair sitting with officials in a meeting room.

"Pleased to meet with Premier Li Keqiang. We discussed Covid-19 and the need for an aggressive effort on vaccine equity this year to vaccinate

70 percent of all populations," Tedros said.

"We also discussed the need for stronger collaboration on Covid-19 virus origins, rooted in science and evidence.

"I welcomed his support to strengthen WHO and discussion about a pandemic accord to advance global preparedness," he added.

Tedros is paying his first visit to China since January 2020, in the weeks after the first cases of Covid-19 were recorded in Wuhan.

After much delay, a WHO



Performers are seen at the Winter Olympic Park in Beijing, capital of China, 2 February 2022. PHOTO: CAI YANG/XINHUA

team of international experts went to Wuhan in January 2021

to look into the origins of the virus in cooperation with their

Chinese counterparts.

Their March 2021 joint report concluded that the most likely hypothesis was that the virus jumped from bats to humans via an intermediate animal.

They deemed a theory that it may have escaped from Wuhan's virology laboratories "extremely unlikely".

The Geneva-based WHO has created a new team of scientists to revive the stalled probe and to investigate other pathogens that could potentially spur future pandemics. — AFP ■

Germany's daily COVID-19 infections near 250,000 amid Omicron wave



An elderly woman walks past a coronavirus testing site in the city center in Halle/Saale, eastern Germany, 25 January 2022. PHOTO: AFP / JENS SCHLUETER

GERMANY'S daily COVID-19 infections reached a new all-time high, with 248,838 new cases registered within 24 hours, the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) for infectious diseases said on

Friday.

The country's seven-day COVID-19 incidence also continued to rise and hit a new record of 1,349.5 infections per 100,000 inhabitants, according

to the RKI.

"The Omicron wave is slowly reaching the elderly population and more outbreaks are being reported in nursing homes," the RKI said on Twitter.

Despite record figures, the number of COVID-19 patients treated in intensive care units (ICUs) remained at around 2,300, far below the peak of around 5,700 during the height of the second wave in early 2021, according to the German Intensive Care Availability Register (DIVI).

"Studies suggest that the Omicron variant causes a lower share of hospitalizations compared to infections with the Delta variant in infected persons with complete vaccination or booster vaccination," the RKI said in its latest weekly report. — Xinhua ■

Israel eases COVID-19 restrictions as active cases fall

ISRAEL'S Health Ministry decided on Friday to ease the COVID-19 Green Pass system, which stipulates that only those who have been vaccinated or recovered from COVID-19 infection could enter crowded indoor or outdoor places.

According to the decision, which will take effect on Monday, restaurants, cinemas, hotels, and gyms, among other places, will no longer require a green pass upon entry.

A green pass, however, is needed at venues where there is a significant danger of infection, such as event halls and nightclubs.

According to the Health



An Israeli medical worker presents her certificate of vaccination after receiving a second Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 shot, but the issue of virus passports has divided Europe. PHOTO: AFP

Ministry, the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Israel has risen to 3,111,307, with 46,429 new cases reported on Friday.

The country's death toll rose

by 38 to 9,111, while the number of patients in critical condition decreased from 1,147 to 1,130, according to the ministry. — Xinhua ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Greece to drop testing for European vaccine holders: minister

GREECE will no longer require travellers with European vaccine passports to undergo Covid-19 tests before entering the country, from next week, the health minister said Friday.

"As of Monday, those with active European (vaccination) certificates will enter without obligatory testing," Health Minister Thanos Plevis said in a televised statement.

Greece has followed several other EU countries in relaxing pandemic restrictions as it aims for a 4.5-percent spurt of economic growth this year.

Tourism Minister Vassilis Kikilias on Friday said the move was designed to boost the country's important travel industry, with the season launching on 1 March. — AFP ■

US CDC recommends Moderna COVID-19 vaccine after FDA's full approval

THE US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Friday endorsed recommendation from its vaccine advisers for use of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine for people ages 18 years and older.

The recommendation came after the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) granted full approval to the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine on Monday.

"We now have another fully approved COVID-19 vaccine," said CDC Director Rochelle Walensky in a statement.

"If you have been waiting for approval before getting vaccinated, now is the time to join the nearly 212 million Americans who have already completed their primary series. CDC continues to recommend that people remain up to date on their COVID-19 vaccines, including getting a booster shot when eligible," she said. — Xinhua ■

US death toll from Covid-19 surpasses 900,000: tracker

THE US death toll from the Covid-19 pandemic surpassed 900,000 on Friday, according to the Johns Hopkins University coronavirus tracker. The toll had hit 800,000 dead in mid-December, just a month and a half ago.

New cases linked to the Omicron variant are falling, but daily deaths are still rising, with an average of 2,400 now, according to government figures. "Hospitalizations remain high, stretching our healthcare capacity and workforce to its limits in some areas of the country," said Rochelle Walensky, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Covid deaths usually occur a few weeks after patients get the virus, which explains why the spike in deaths occurs later than the spike in new cases. — AFP ■

**NEWS
IN BRIEF****Australia “very close” to reopening to tourists: minister**

THE Australian government has confirmed that it is “very close” to reopening international borders to tourists. The federal government’s national security committee will meet on Monday where it is expected to discuss on the reopening.

“That is a priority for us,” Karen Andrews, the Minister for Home Affairs, told Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) on Sunday.

“We don’t have all of the information that we need to be able to take the decision to open, but we are very close.”

Reopening to tourists would mark an end to Australia’s border restrictions almost two years after they were first introduced in March 2020 to prevent the spread of COVID-19. — Xinhua ■

Israeli desert town aims to be medical ‘cannabis capital’

IN Israel’s Negev desert, far from the skyscrapers of Tel Aviv, the town of Yeruham hopes to cultivate an international reputation as the country’s medical cannabis technology powerhouse.

Dozens of start-ups are already working on medical cannabis in Israel, where new legislation is expected to lead to further market growth in the fast-expanding sector.

Some believe that cannabis could help Yeruham tackle unemployment among its 12,000 residents, with initial efforts being led by a firm called CanNegev. The company is known as an incubator, helping foster the growth of infant firms. CanNegev shelters four start-ups and is Israel’s first medical cannabis technology incubator.

“We have decided to make medical cannabis the heart of our activity, here in Yeruham, one of the most peripheral towns in Israel – a forgotten city,” said CanNegev founder Zvi Bet Or. He discovered a receptive audience in Tal Ohana, elected in 2018 to be Yeruham’s first female mayor.

“My dream is to make Yeruham the capital of medical cannabis in Israel,” Ohana told AFP. — Xinhua ■

UN chief calls for accelerating investments into Africa

Agriculture remains a marginal sector in Libya, where the economy is dominated by hydrocarbons, the country boasting the most abundant oil reserves in Africa. **PHOTO: AFP**

UNITED Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Saturday called for accelerating investments into Africa.

The Secretary-General made the remarks while addressing the 35th Ordinary Ses-

sion of the African Union (AU) Assembly via video link as African leaders met physically for the first time since the onset of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. “Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals depends on sup-

porting massive investments in strong health and education systems, in job-creation, especially in the green and care sectors, and in universal social protection, gender equality, and opportunities for young people,” Guterres told African leaders.

The two-day AU Assembly summit, slated from 5 to 6 February at the headquarters of the AU in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, is being held under the theme of the year “Building Resilience in Nutrition on the African Continent: Accelerate the Human Capital, Social and Economic Development.”

“We need to accelerate investment into Africa,” he said, adding that “we need to deliver real investment resources, including by redirecting Special

Drawing Rights to countries that need support now, reforming the international debt architecture for the future, increasing concessional forms of finance, and ensuring that African countries with sound economic fundamentals are not unduly penalized by markets and rating institutions.”

He further called for the need to fuel the immense promise of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA). Issues such as rebuilding Africa from the brunt of the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring continental peace and security, socio-economic development, as well as representation of Africa in multilateral international institutions took center stage at the AU Assembly Summit. — Xinhua ■

French luxury houses give unsold goods a second chance

IN the extravagant world of the French luxury industry, brands used to prefer destroying their unsold goods rather than offering their high-priced products at a discount.

But gone are the days of binning the coats, handbags and shoes pooh-poohed by shoppers after a new anti-waste law came into force at the start of the year.

Now luxury houses are managing their stocks more carefully, offering deals to staff, making donations and recycling goods.

“It’s a subject that has become important today,” said Julie El Ghouzzi, a luxury goods expert at the Cultz consulting agency.

She pointed to the scandal that engulfed Burberry in 2018 after the British luxury brand disclosed that it had destroyed 28 million pounds (\$38 million,



Luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton are managing stocks more carefully, recycling goods and making donations as trashing unsold goods are no longer an option. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

34 million euros at current exchange rates) of unsold goods in 2017 — the equivalent of 20,000

of its trench coats.

Following the firestorm the revelation triggered, Burberry

announced it would halt the practice from the following year. — AFP ■

Cuba slaps new tax on food sales as economic woes hit hard

A man with a banana cart in Havana, Cuba on 26 January 2022. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

CUBA on Saturday announced a new 10 percent tax on retail food sales, as the country endures economic woes marked by rampant inflation.

The levy taking effect Monday will target self-employed people and small- and medium-sized companies in the retail food sector, said the decree published in the official government gazette. These sales were only allowed starting in August of last year as part of reforms in the communist run island.

Cuban economist Pedro Monreal wrote on Twitter that

the new tax will probably have two effects: higher food prices and more inequality among the Cuban people.

Monreal said it will hurt “lower income households that spend a relatively higher percentage of their resources on food.”

Monetary reforms applied last year caused prices of goods and services to shoot up in Cuba, mainly those of food. Inflation last year came in at 70 percent.

People have to wait in long lines for scarce supplies of food and medicine. — AFP ■

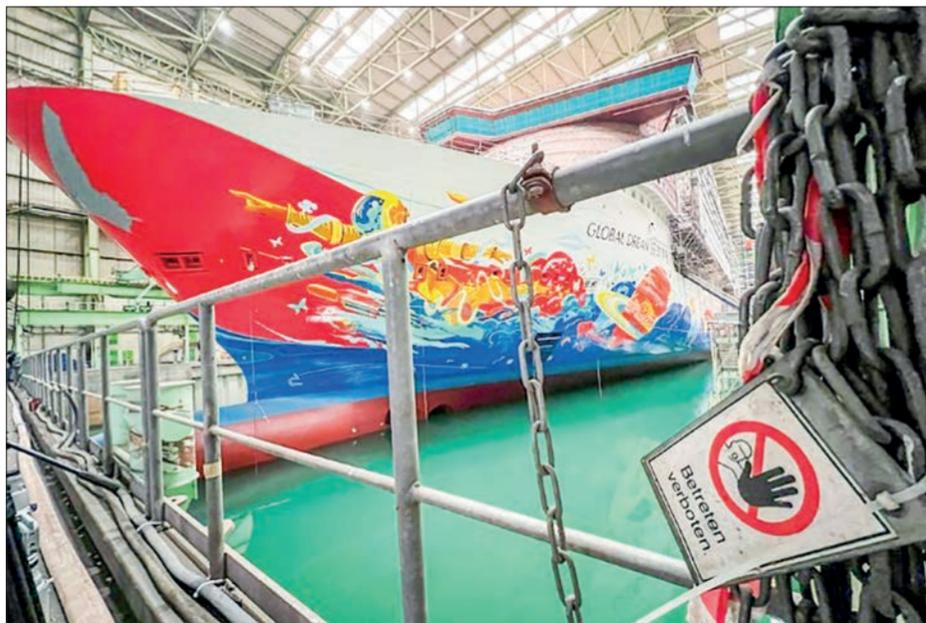
'Global Dream' turns into nightmare for German port town

THE unfinished "Global Dream" rests quietly in a dock as the Covid-19 pandemic has turned the cruise ship into a nightmare for the shipyard in Wismar along Germany's windswept Baltic coast.

Destined to have become one of the world's largest liners, the "Global Dream" will be lucky to ever set sail after the Asian-owned MV Werften shipyard filed for bankruptcy last month.

With no buyer having stepped forward, thousands of jobs at the shipyard are at risk and the local economy stands to take a huge hit.

"We are the classic victims of coronavirus," said Carsten Haake, MV Werften's chief executive.



Work has stopped on the 342m long and almost finished "Global Dream" cruise ship after Asian owner of the shipyard collapsed last month. PHOTO: AFP

The bankruptcy filing meant that construction work on the vessel, which would have become one of the first ships capable of

hosting up to 10,000 passengers and crew, was halted.

MV Werften's fate was decided thousands of kilo-

metres away in Asia, in the offices of Genting HK, the owner of the shipyard and the Dream Cruises operator. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Seibu eyes selling hotels, other assets to Singapore's GIC

SEIBU Holdings Inc is considering selling about 30 properties in Japan, including Prince brand hotels, to Singaporean sovereign wealth fund GIC for about 150 billion yen (\$1.3 billion), sources familiar with the plan said Saturday.

Of the total, about a dozen are believed to be hotels such as The Prince Park Tower Tokyo, Prince Hotel Sapporo and Grand Prince Hotel Hiroshima, as the COVID-19 pandemic affected the company's main railway and hotel businesses.

A Seibu group company will operate the hotels and other facilities, such as a ski resort and a golf course, after the planned sale, according to the sources.

Initially, Seibu Holdings had studied the sale of around 40 assets as part of efforts to improve business efficiency and bolster the fiscal base, they said.

Commenting on the planned sale, the Tokyo-based company said nothing has been decided at this point.

The company has Seibu Railway based in north-western Tokyo and western Saitama Prefecture, as well as Prince Hotels, one of the largest hotel chain operators in Japan, as core subsidiaries. — Kyodo ■

China's container giant forecasts massive surge in profits

COSCO Shipping Holdings Co Ltd (COSCO Shipping), one of the largest container carriers worldwide, forecast soaring profits in 2021 due to the tight supply of containers amid the pandemic.

Net profit attributable to shareholders during the period will likely jump 799.3 percent, year on year, to about 89.28 billion yuan (about 14 billion US dollars), according to a report the company filed with the Shanghai Stock Exchange.

Global supply chains were confronted with challenges and impacts from port congestion, container shortage, and inland transportation delays.

Looking toward 2022, the company said that both challenges and opportunities lie ahead, but there will be no radical changes in market fundamentals considering demand and supply.

The company will continue to deepen the integration of the container shipping business and terminal business segment, continuously strengthen business-model innovations via digital technology, and build the new ecology of smart and green shipping.

"The company is confident of achieving good results in 2022," said the report. — Xinhua ■

Owners hope to revive business after reopening of gyms in Delhi



A worker in a PPE suit sanitises gym equipment ahead of reopening in the Capital. PHOTO: THEHINDU/ARUN SHARMA/ANI

WITH the Delhi government announcing to reopen gyms from 7 February after a consistent dip in COVID-19 cases in the national capital, the gym owners

rejoiced and are hoping to revive their business. The gym business has registered a major slump during the Covid pandemic. Amid a decline in daily

COVID-19 cases in the city, the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) on Friday decided to allow the reopening of gyms with certain restrictions. Welcoming the decision of the government, Vice-President of Delhi Gym Association, Chirag Sethi said that it will help "five lakh families" who thrive on this business.

"It is a very positive decision. We welcome this decision. This decision has brought relief to 5 lakh people who are associated with gyms. For almost 40 days, the gym were closed. Now that gyms are being

reopened, people associated with them are in relief thinking that their life will be back on the track."

Assuring to follow all COVID protocols, he said, "We have asked all the gyms to follow Health Ministry guidelines. We also asked them to follow COVID appropriate behaviour. Double vaccination is a must. For people who are not vaccinated, we have asked gym owners to ask them to have vaccination and provide them discounts or extensions so that more people are vaccinated and the covid infection is less." — ANI ■

Ford curbs N American production as chip shortage hits: media

MAJOR automaker Ford will cut its North American vehicle production next week due to a semiconductor shortage, US media reported Saturday.

Ford plans to suspend production of vehicles including the Ford Bronco, the popular F-150 pickup and the new Mustang Mach-E electric vehicle at its plants in Michigan, Illinois and Mexico, according to outlets including CNBC.

Production will be slowed at other facilities in Missouri, Michigan and Kentucky, while overtime will be eliminated at Ford's Oakville, Ontario operations in Canada.

The company has yet to respond to queries by AFP.

A shortage of semiconductors — essential components in new vehicles, and primarily manufactured in Asia — has

impacted automobile production since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, causing prices to spike and contributing to surging US inflation.

President Joe Biden, keen to boost American auto manufacturing, wants to bring semiconductor chip production back to the United States and has held several events to promote massive domestic investments. — AFP ■



Production of several Ford Motor Company vehicles including popular F-150 pickups is being suspended or slowed as the company, like other manufacturers, grapples with a global semiconductor chip shortage. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

NEWS
IN BRIEF

Artificial snow, future of Olympics, says FIS Alpine ski committee chairman

CHAIRMAN of the Alpine ski committee of the International Ski Federation (FIS) Bernhard Russi spoke highly of the quality of snow at the Yanqing National Alpine Skiing Centre of Beijing 2022 here on Saturday, noting that artificial snow is the future for Alpine events at the Olympic Games.

"I am not a specialist for snow making, I'm a course designer, but what I can tell you is that the snow we find right now on the courses is absolutely perfect. You can not have it better," said Russi.

"I think for the ski racers, it's just like paradise. They can do whatever they want. It's beautiful for skiing," the chairman added.

Russi mentioned having received positive feedback from Alpine skiers, who said the snow and the course is quite easy to ski. "What means easy to ski? Easy to ski is you can make the turn wherever you want," Russi noted. — Xinhua ■

US waives sanctions for Iran civil nuclear programme

THE US State Department is waiving sanctions on Iran's civilian nuclear programme in a technical step necessary to return to the 2015 nuclear agreement, a senior official said Friday.

The resumption of the waiver, ended by the Donald Trump administration in 2020, "would be essential to ensuring Iran's swift compliance" if a new deal on controlling Tehran's nuclear program can be reached in talks in Vienna, the State Department official said.

The waiver allows other countries and companies to participate in Iran's civilian nuclear programme without triggering US sanctions on them, in the name of promoting safety and non-proliferation.

The civilian programme includes Iran's increasing stockpiles of enriched uranium. — Xinhua ■

5 killed in coal mine explosion in SW Pakistan

A coal mine blast in Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan province killed at least five workers and injured five others, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) of Balochistan said on Saturday. The incident happened due to the accumulation of methane gas in the coal mine located on the outskirts of Quetta, the provincial capital of Balochistan, according to the PDMA.

The injured were taken to a nearby hospital, with three of them in critical condition.

The authorities sealed off the mine after the explosion, and launched an investigation into the incident. — Xinhua ■

Macron the mediator wades into Russia-Ukraine crisis



French President Emmanuel Macron has spoken to Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin three times in the last week and will visit Moscow on Monday. PHOTO: AFP

FRENCH President Emmanuel Macron will fly to Russia and Ukraine next week in an attempt to avert conflict between the neighbours, reprising his role as a crisis mediator that has produced limited results in the past.

The 44-year-old leader, who

is facing elections in April, has repeatedly thrown himself into the search for solutions to some of the world's most acute diplomatic problems from Iran's nuclear programme to Libya's civil war.

His latest attempts to low-

er tensions between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky are consistent with the two main features of his thrusting foreign policy since coming to power in 2017.

He has always argued that Europe and the European Union should take greater charge of its own defence and security, and has sought to push France forward on the international stage with what he describes as "diplomacy of audacity."

He laid out this philosophy in front of French ambassadors in 2019, telling them that Europe risked disappearing unless it stood up for itself and arguing that the only choice is "to take part in the game and use our weight".

"I believe in one thing: it's a strategy of audacity and taking risks," he said. — AFP ■

Senior EU official urges for fair European approach to migration

A holistic, coherent, and fair European approach to migration is the only way forward and member states must agree on a Migration and Asylum pact, a senior official of the European Union (EU) said here Friday.

"Greece today manages migration with a clear plan, tangible results and is a pioneer in the co-shaping of a coherent European policy... The challenges we face remain significant," said Margaritis Schinas, vice president of the European Commission.

Greece is one of the countries at the forefront of the refugee and migrant crisis in recent years which has called for more



First groups of refugees and migrants onboard a bus arrive at a new migrant camp on the island of Samos, Greece, 20 September 2021. PHOTO: CFP/XINHUA

proportionate burden-sharing among EU member states.

More than a million people entered the country since 2015,

mainly from Turkey, fleeing war-zones and extreme poverty, according to migration authorities. — Xinhua ■

Sending mercenaries to Libya main income source for Darfur armed groups: UN



PROVIDING mercenaries in Libya's internal conflict has become the main source of revenue for armed groups from Sudan's own war-torn Darfur region, the United Nations said in a report Friday.

The report, drawn up by UN

Cadets of the 'Saiqa' force (Special Forces) of the self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) affiliated with eastern strongman Khalifa Haftar take part in a graduation ceremony in the eastern city of Benghazi, on 20 January 2022. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

experts in charge of monitoring the arms embargo imposed on Sudan, said the guns-for-hire deals had been facilitated by the United Arab Emirates.

It said the activity meant that the arms embargo had been broken "with the transfer of arms and other military materiel into Darfur."

"Mercenary activities in Libya had been the major source of financing for most Darfurian movements" in 2021, the report said.

It noted that thousands of Sudanese mercenaries are

in Libya in the service of the self-proclaimed Libyan National Army controlled by Marshal Khalifa Haftar.

These mercenaries come from signatory and non-signatory movements of the Juba Peace Agreement, concluded in October 2020, the experts said, adding that they are not able to quantify the total number.

"Most Darfurian armed groups continued to work for the Libyan National Army in Libya during the reporting period, securing areas and manning checkpoints. — AFP ■

Philippines' raucous election campaign season to kick off

PHILIPPINE election candidates will hit the hustings Tuesday for the official start of campaigning, with the son and namesake of former dictator Ferdinand Marcos leading the presidential race as he seeks the ultimate revival of the family brand.

Political scions, celebrities and ex-convicts are among the contenders vying for more than 18,000 posts in the 9 May polls, with most interest on the contest to succeed authoritarian firebrand Rodrigo Duterte, whose six-year presidency has been marked by foul-mouthed tirades and a deadly drug war.

More than 35 years after the Philippines emerged from his father's dictatorship, voter surveys show Ferdinand Marcos Jr heading towards a landslide victory as a massive social media campaign cranks up support and, critics say, whitewashes the clan's history.



Philippines' Vice President Leni Robredo poses with her daughters Aika and Tricia after filing her certificate of candidacy for president in the 2022 national election, in Pasay City, Metro Manila, Philippines, 7 October 2021. PHOTO: EZRA ACAYA/POOL/AFP

Boosted by a formidable alliance with first daughter and vice-presidential candidate Sara Duterte, Marcos Jr — one of the

most polarising figures in the Philippines — has vowed “to unify the country and give our fellowmen the future that they

deserve”.

In the Philippines, the president and vice-president are elected separately. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Queen Elizabeth II says Camilla should become Queen Consort

QUEEN Elizabeth II on Saturday in a message to the nation said she wanted Camilla, the wife of her heir Prince Charles, to ultimately be known as Queen Consort.

The 95-year-old monarch said it was her “sincere wish” that when Charles becomes king, Camilla be known as Queen Consort, in a major statement on the eve of the 70th anniversary of her accession to the throne.

Addressing the nation in a written statement signed Elizabeth R, she added that when Charles becomes monarch, she knew the British people would give him and Camilla “the same support that you have given me”.

“It is my sincere wish that, when that time comes, Camilla will be known as Queen Consort as she continues her own loyal service,” she said. — AFP ■

Tunisian president dissolves top judicial watchdog, accuses it of bias



Kais Saied has concentrated all executive power since July 25, when he dismissed his Prime Minister and suspended parliament. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

TUNISIAN President Kais Saied has dissolved a major independ-

ent judicial watchdog, he said Sunday, accusing it of bias and

working for special interests.

The Superior Council of the Judiciary (CSM) “is a thing of the past”, the president said in a video, accusing the body responsible for appointing judges of corruption and delaying politically sensitive investigations, including into the assassinations of left-wing activists in 2013.

Tunisia was the only democracy to emerge from the Arab Spring revolts of a decade ago, but civil society groups and Saied's opponents have expressed fear of a slide back to the authoritarianism seen under long-time dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

Observers say the govern-

ment is seeking to clamp down on the Islamist-inspired Ennahda party, which has controlled parliament and the various governments since the 2011 revolution which toppled Ben Ali.

Saied has concentrated all executive power since 25 July, when he dismissed his Prime Minister and suspended parliament — a decision described as a coup by Ennahda and other opposition figures. He has since ruled by decree.

The “25 July movement” — composed of his top supporters — Saturday called on the president to dissolve the CSM in order to “purge” the judiciary of “corrupt magistrates”. — AFP ■

Egypt's anti-drug fund successful in reducing drug addiction rate: official

EGYPT has reduced the drug abuse rate among governmental employees to 1.7 percent, down from 8 percent in 2019, thanks to a slew of measures implemented by the government to combat drug abuse in government institutions, an official with the country's drug control fund said in a recent interview.

Egypt's Fund for Drug Control and Treatment of Addiction (FDCTA) had randomly tested about 400,000 employees in the country's government offices, and discovered the rate of drug abuse among government employees had significantly decreased, FDCTA Director Amr Osman told Xinhua.

According to the official, the 1.7 percent drug abuse rate among government employees in Egypt is lower than the national average of 5.9 percent, while the country's drug addiction rate is nearly 2.4 percent.

In Egypt, the age group most vulnerable to drug abuse is between 15 and 25 years old, and the age group most likely to seek treatment is between 25 and 35 years old, he said. — Xinhua ■

US officials say Russia preparing full-scale invasion of Ukraine

RUSSIA has stepped up preparations for an all-out invasion of Ukraine but it is not clear if Moscow has decided to take such a step, US officials have said citing intelligence assessments.

Russia has assembled 110,000 troops along the border with its pro-Western neighbor but US intelligence has not determined if President Vladimir Putin has actually decided to invade, according to the officials who in recent days briefed members of Congress and European allies.

The officials warned lawmakers that the assembled Russian force on the frontier is growing at a rate that would

give Putin the force he needs for a full-scale invasion — some 150,000 soldiers — by mid-February.

They said Putin wants all possible options at his disposal: from a limited campaign in the pro-Russian Donbas region of Ukraine to a full-scale invasion.

Russia denies that it is planning to invade Ukraine.

If Moscow does opt for a full-scale attack, the invading force could take the capital Kyiv and topple President Volodymyr Zelensky in a matter of 48 hours, the officials said.

They estimated such an attack would leave 25,000 to 50,000 civilians dead, along with 5,000



Members of Ukraine's navy fire a gun during drills held in the Black Sea last month. PHOTO: UKRAINIAN NAVAL FORCES HANDOUT/AFP

to 25,000 Ukrainian soldiers and 3,000 to 10,000 Russian ones.

It could also trigger a ref-

ugee flood of one to five million people, mainly into Poland, the officials added. — AFP ■

Myanmar women's squad spends two months for SEA Games

THE Myanmar women's football team has a chance to spend about two months preparing for the 31st Vietnam SEA Games in coming May, according to the Myanmar Football Federation.

The Myanmar women's squad returned to Yangon at the end of January after last month's 2022 AFC Women's Cup and is under quarantine according to the COVID-19 health guidelines.

After the deadline, those

players will be given a few days off and training will begin later this month, football officials said.

The team will spend about two months preparing for the SEA Games and is preparing for international pre-match matches, officials added.

The team will compete in the Asian Cup in October 2021. The Myanmar Football Federation is trying to arrange a pre-SEA Games qualifier before the final round of the 2022 Asian

Cup, which was played in January this year.

The Myanmar women's team was eliminated from the group stage of the last Asian Cup, as the team lost to top Asian teams Japan and South Korea with narrow result, and drew a 2-2 with Vietnam.

The Myanmar women's national team has won a bronze medal at the 2019 Philippine SEA Games.—Ko Nyi Lay/GNLM ■

Bolshunov claims Russia's first Olympic gold in skiathlon at Beijing 2022



Alexander Bolshunov powered to victory for the ROC team. PHOTO: MATTHIAS HANGST / GETTY/RT/XINHUA

RUSSIAN Olympic Committee athlete Alexander Bolshunov won his first Olympic gold in the men's 30km cross-country skiathlon at Beijing 2022 on Sunday.

The skiathlon began with 15 kilometers of classic skiing, and switched to freestyle after the half-point. The 25-year-old opened a big gap in the second

half and crossed the line with a comfortable lead, winning in one hour, 16 minutes and 9.8 seconds.

His compatriot Denis Spitsov surpassed Finnish athlete Livo Niskanen in the second half to take his third Olympic silver medal in 1:17:20.8. Niskanen finished third in 1:18:10.0.

This is Bolshunov's first Olympic gold medal, after the Russian won three silver medals (50km mass start, team sprint, 4x10km relay) and one bronze (sprint) at Pyeongchang 2018. Since his World Cup debut in 2017, Bolshunov has been considered Russia's star shooter, and has been compared to three-time Olympic champion Johannes Klaebo.—Xinhua ■

Ireland's Maguire captures first LPGA title by three strokes

IRELAND'S Leona Maguire captured her first LPGA title on Saturday, firing a five-under par 67 to win the Drive On Championship by three strokes.

The 27-year-old former amateur world number one sank seven birdies against two bogeys to finish on 18-under 198 for the 54-hole event at Crown Colony in Fort Myers, Florida.

"It has been a long time coming. You don't know if it's actually going to happen until it does," Maguire said.

"I tried to stay really patient today and didn't get ahead of myself. Wanted to go out and just shoot a number. I didn't

want anybody to have to hand it to me. I wanted to go out and win it myself." Maguire kept

calm under the pressure of delivering the biggest triumph of her career.—AFP ■



Ireland's Leona Maguire won her first LPGA Tour title on Saturday, firing a five-under par 67 to capture the 54-hole Drive On Championship by three strokes. PHOTO: AFP

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Nine Objectives

1. Political affairs

- To build a Union based on democracy and federalism, through a disciplined and genuine multiparty democratic system that is fair and just.
- To emphasize the achievement of enduring peace for the entire nation in line with the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).
- To continue implementing the principle of peaceful co-existence among countries through an independent, active and non-aligned foreign policy.

2. Economic affairs

- To enhance production based on agriculture and livestock through modern techniques and strengthen all-round development in other sectors of the economy.
- To develop a stable market economy and promote international investment in order to enhance the economic development of the entire National people.
- To promote and support local businesses to create employment opportunities and increase domestic production.

3. Social affairs

- To ensure a strong and dynamic Union spirit, the genuine spirit of patriotism.
- To respect and promote the customs and traditions of all National peoples and preserve and safeguard their cultural heritage and national characteristics.
- To enhance the health, fitness and education quality of the entire nation.

'Run of my life' brings historic New Zealand Winter Olympic gold



New Zealand's Zoi Sadowski Synnott reacts after winning the snowboard women's slopestyle final. PHOTO: AFP

SNOWBOARDER Zoi Sadowski Synnott produced the "best run of my life" to win New Zealand's first Winter Olympics gold medal ever at the Beijing Games on Sunday. The 20-year-old, clad in all black, came from behind to snatch the women's snowboard slopestyle title with an incredible final run, the last of the competition.

She landed a gargantuan backside double 1080 trick on her final jump to earn a score of 92.88, overtaking American Julia Marino for the lead. Sadowski Synnott raised her arms in celebration before being mobbed by Marino and Australian bronze-medallist Tess Coady, as her team-mates waved New Zealand and silver fern flags nearby. "Honestly it's absolute disbelief but it probably means more to me to win New Zealand's first Winter Olympic gold," said Sadowski Synnott, who was born in Sydney but moved to New Zealand aged six. "It makes me super proud to be a Kiwi."—AFP ■